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# Well-wishing practices in Greek and English food blogs

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**Abstract:** Wishes are remarks that express the desire that things will turn out well for one's interlocutor. They are among the expressive speech acts that have received scant scholarly attention. Purporting to further their study in online communication and extend the line of their comparative analysis, the present study examines wishes in the digital environment of Greek and English food blogs. Employing the relational work framework, our study examines 1,061 wishes occurring in the comment section of three Greek and three English food blogs. Our aim is to identify the triggering events, the types (situational, interactional or mixed) and forms (conventionalised or creative) of wishes found in the data, and the functions they perform in terms of relational work (politic or polite). Our analysis shows that the majority of wishes in Greek and English food blogs are situational. Interactional wishes are also present in the data; however, the majority of the English ones relates to the topic of the blog, i.e., the making or the consumption of a dish, whereas most Greek interactional wishes concern the addressee's well-being. Finally, mixed wishes appear much more frequently in the Greek than in the English dataset. Our findings suggest that wishes are instances of polite relational work for Greek commenters, whereas of politic behaviour for the English.

**Keywords:** wishes; politeness; relational work; food blogs

**Greek abstract:** Οι ευχές εκφράζουν την επιθυμία να πάνε τα πράγματα καλά για τον/την συνομιλητή/τρια μας. Συγκαταλέγονται στις εκφραστικές λεκτικές πράξεις που δεν έχουν μελετηθεί ιδιαίτερα. Με στόχο την περαιτέρω διερεύνηση των ευχών στη διαδικτυακή επικοινωνία και τη συγκριτική ανάλυσή τους, η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει ευχές στο ψηφιακό περιβάλλον των ελληνικών και αγγλικών ιστολογίων συνταγών. Χρησιμοποιώντας το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο της σχεσιακής εργασίας,

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η μελέτη μας εξετάζει 1.061 ευχές που εμφανίζονται στην ενότητα σχολίων τριών ελληνικών και τριών αγγλικών ιστολογίων συνταγών. Στόχος μας είναι να προσδιορίσουμε το γεγονός ότι για τα οποία εκφράζονται ευχές, το είδος (καταστασιακές, αλληλεπιδραστικές, μικτές) και τη μορφή (συμβατικές ή δημιουργικές) των ευχών που απαντώνται στα δεδομένα, καθώς και τις λειτουργίες τους ως προς την σχεσιακή εργασία που επιτελείται (απλώς αρμόζουσα/πολιτική ή ευγενική σχεσιακή εργασία). Η ανάλυσή μας δείχνει ότι οι περισσότερες ευχές στα ελληνικά και αγγλικά ιστολόγια είναι καταστασιακές. Στα δεδομένα μας περιλαμβάνονται και αλληλεπιδραστικές ευχές. Ωστόσο, η συντριπτική πλειονότητα των αγγλικών ευχών σχετίζεται με το θέμα του ιστολογίου, δηλαδή την παρασκευή ή την κατανάλωση ενός πιάτου, ενώ οι περισσότερες ελληνικές αλληλεπιδραστικές ευχές αφορούν την ευημερία του/της αποδέκτη/τριας. Τέλος, οι μικτές ευχές εμφανίζονται πολύ πιο συχνά στα ελληνικά από ό,τι στα αγγλικά δεδομένα. Τα ευρήματα της μελέτης μας υποδηλώνουν ότι στα ελληνικά ιστολόγια συνταγών οι ευχές είναι περιπτώσεις ευγενικής σχεσιακής εργασίας, ενώ στα αγγλικά ιστολόγια είναι περιπτώσεις απλώς αρμόζουσας (πολιτικής) συμπεριφοράς.

**Λέξεις κλειδιά:** ευχές; ευγένεια; σχεσιακή εργασία; ιστολόγια συνταγών

## 1 Introduction

Most studies on digital communication focus on impoliteness, a behaviour that is commonly observed in online interactions (see, e.g., Antoci et al. 2019). The present paper shifts the focus to politeness aiming to explore well-wishing practices in Greek and English food blogs. This exploration may also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of food blogging, a field that has so far received limited scholarly attention (Mainolfi et al. 2022: 431).

Food blogging is defined as “the practice of publishing food-related posts on a blog” (Lee et al. 2014: 228). Food bloggers post their food and cooking practices as a way of sharing their ideas and expertise with blog visitors. The latter may respond by posting comments in which they usually evaluate the posted recipes (Diemer and Frobenius 2013; Tzanne 2022). While such responses are expected to include positive evaluation, e.g., praise and compliments, well-wishing remarks might not be anticipated to appear frequently.

Such remarks fall under Searle’s (1969) category of “expressives” which are understood as speech acts that convey feelings and emotions. They are acts which reflect “social and interpersonal relations”, often influenced by politeness considerations (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010: 159). According to Dumitrescu (2006: 24),

wishes function not only as polite speech acts, but also as powerful indicators of solidarity among members of communities who share common cultural values.

Purporting to further the study of wishes in online communication, and at the same time to contribute to the comparative analysis of the phenomenon, the present study intends to explore the forms and functions of wishes in the digital environment of Greek and English food blogs. To pursue our aims, we have collected posts and comments from Greek and English food blogs where bloggers are female, non-professional cooks, consistently engaging with their audiences by uploading recipes, commenting and responding to posters' comments. Our dataset consists of comments from three English and three Greek food blogs.

The theoretical framework employed for the analysis of our data is that of relational work, i.e., the discursive approach to politeness proposed by Watts (2003) and Locher and Watts (2005). The value of this approach lies in its focus on interactants' perceptions and evaluations of im/politeness, highlighting how speakers co-construct im/politeness and manage social relationships through language. It examines im/politeness as a range of evaluations (from politic and polite to conflictual), and includes behaviour that is neither polite nor impolite but simply appropriate (politic) for a given context. Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) positive politeness strategies are used to interpret instances of relational work that aim to build rapport and express solidarity (Locher and Watts 2005: 10).

The paper is organised as follows. The following section (Section 2) provides a fleeting sketch of the vast area of blogging, especially food blogging, and a brief overview of relevant theoretical issues relating to politeness and well-wishing. The methodology and the data used in this study are described in Section 3, and the findings of the study are presented in Section 4. Section 5 discusses the findings in terms of the type of relational work performed, and offers some concluding remarks.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Food blogs

Blogging is among the most enduring social media communication practices. In Heyd's (2017: 152) words, "blogging is a persistent communicative practice that precedes the age of social media, yet has robustly survived the advent of later sociotechnical modes such as microblogging and audiovisual formats". Initially used mostly to keep in touch with friends and family, blogging has since evolved and is now used for a variety of purposes (Hoffmann 2017: 4), such as the promotional

efforts of companies (via corporate blogs, fashion blogs, travel blogs) or the journalistic reporting of political events (via journalistic blogs).

As noted by Mainolfi et al. (2022: 430), food blogging has recently experienced a surge in popularity surpassing that of travel and fashion. Despite this growth and the fact that food bloggers increasingly participate in influencer marketing, there is still little research on food blogging (Mainolfi et al. 2022: 431), especially as regards the way language is used.

In blogs, the “sense of joint purpose and recognizability among at least some of the members” may set the backdrop for relational work of solidarity (Androutsopoulos 2023: 2). Much like blogs, food blogs are interactive, text-based, asynchronous forums of digitally mediated communication (DMC) allowing reader comments. Despite being text-based, this mode of communication often mirrors face-to-face interactions between friends, fostering involvement and a sense of intimate community. Informal language, emojis, and shared cultural references help simulate spoken cues, contributing to the formation of socially cohesive online communities (see, e.g., Androutsopoulos 2006). Such interactions frequently rely on creativity, immediacy and shared interests, creating and sustaining social bonds and a conversational tone despite the absence of physical co-presence. They thus serve as tools for “reaching out and engaging with others” and are “crucially tied to matters of identity work” (Heyd 2017: 164). One could suggest that participation in food blogging has similar effects to those of the longstanding offline practice of food and recipe sharing, which facilitated the building of social relationships. Given that “the connection between women and foodwork has a striking degree of historical and cross-cultural consistency” (Cairns and Johnston 2015: 6), we could reasonably assume that both bloggers and their most engaged commenters will tend to be women, especially in amateur, home-cooking contexts.

Food bloggers and visitors to food blogs are individuals who share an interest in food, especially its preparation. Many food bloggers are amateur users who see blogging as a hobby (Lee et al. 2014: 229). They post their food and cooking practices, frequently including photos, to which interested others may react, thus creating a “community of practice”<sup>1</sup> (see, e.g., Mills 2003) or a “community of knowledge” (Blommaert 2017), since “food blogs represent a valuable source of information and knowledge regarding food” (Mainolfi et al. 2022: 432; see also Lee et al. 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Let us note here that a community of practice is a group of people who share an interest and develop common ways of communicating (Lave and Wenger 1991). Im/politeness in such groups depends on shared norms, what is seen as polite in one community might be rude elsewhere. For instance, what is banter in an online gaming community might be rude in face-to-face communication among colleagues in a departmental meeting.

Food bloggers share their ideas, knowledge and expertise with interested others, while blog visitors present their own tweaked recipes, evaluate the recipes presented, get informed on new recipes and enrich their knowledge on various aspects of cooking (Diemer and Frobenius 2013; Tzanne 2022). Food blogs constitute what Lee et al. (2014) call a “hybrid space”, where bloggers and posters interact and create meaning.

## 2.2 Politeness

Politeness is a fundamental aspect of building social relationships. Research in the area abounds with Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) and Leech (1983) laying the foundations for its vast expansion. These early theories have garnered extensive support and a great deal of criticism. The most systematic and groundbreaking critique emerged within the so-called discursive turn in im/politeness research pioneered by Eelen (2001), along with Mills (2003) and Watts (2003). Among the most important contributions of the discursive turn are its emphasis on the evaluative and situated nature of politeness (and impoliteness) and its linking identity construction with the processes of evaluation (Locher and Larina 2019: 875). In this new landscape, a range of theoretical accounts of (im)politeness emerged, among which is the relational work approach which foregrounds the relational aspect of language use.

Given that interaction is rarely purely transactional (i.e., “content”-oriented) but simultaneously involves the establishment and maintenance of social relationships and the negotiation of identities (i.e., also interactional) (see, e.g., Brown and Yule 1983; Kasper 1990; Locher 2004), establishing and maintaining social relationships should be a central focus of attention. Locher and Watts (2005: 10) see relational work as referring to “the ‘work’ individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others” and elsewhere, the same authors (Locher and Watts 2008: 96) provide a more nuanced definition of it as “all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice”. This is a much wider framework than just politeness, dealing with “broader issues of interpersonal interaction” (Haugh 2007: 297), a challenge that Locher et al. (2015: 4) acknowledge and respond to by saying that even though “politeness is still present as a concern, the negotiation, creation and maintenance of relations and the study of the interpersonal aspect of language use has attained center stage”. It is, thus, a concept tied to the construction of relationships (Locher and Bolander 2017).

In this framework, an interesting, even though “somewhat controversial” (Watts 2010: 44) concept that was introduced by Watts (1989) and was further elaborated in

his later work (1992, 2003), is that of “politic” behaviour. The term has been defined as “linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction” (Watts 2003: 19). In this sense, relational work acknowledges the possibility that there may be instances of verbal behaviour which are “neither polite nor impolite, but merely adequate and appropriate for the task at hand” (Locher 2004: 72). On the other hand, polite behaviour “is more than merely politic, which leads to the interpretation that it was said in order to create interpersonally particular communicative effects” (Watts 2010: 50).

Identifying instances of unmarked politic behaviour may lead to the identification of the norms of appropriateness in the specific discourse context. As such instances are the ones that normally go unnoticed in that participants do not react to them, their identification will also depend on the authors’ own evaluation of them in their context of occurrence. As Tzanne (2022: 69) contends, it is clear that, when working within the framework of relational work, analysts cannot solely rely on participants’ judgements of the situation, but they will also have to use their own interpretative skills to assess instances that have passed unnoticed by the interactants themselves (see also Haugh 2007).

At this point, it should be noted that, despite extensive criticism, some of the terminology and concepts introduced by Brown and Levinson’s (1987 [1978]) model still prevail and are useful, since they “can provide us with a vocabulary with which to talk about dynamic situated interaction” (Grainger 2018: 19). Moreover, for Locher and Watts (2005: 29), the proposed strategies themselves belong to the study of relational work. For instance, the concepts of positive and negative politeness, even though contested, are significant as they reveal two related but different aspects of politeness. In brief, negative politeness (also known as distancing or independence politeness) embraces forms for social distancing, whereas positive politeness (also known as solidarity or involvement politeness) embraces forms for minimising social distance (Brown and Levinson 1987: 130). It is the latter notion that is of relevance to us in this study, not least because it can help discover the kinds of relational work users perform (Maíz-Arévalo 2017a: 587).

Managing sociability in online interaction (and not only) is an issue worth considering with Brown and Levinson’s theory which views politeness essentially as a complex system for mitigating face threatening acts (Leech 2014: 33; Locher and Watts 2005: 10; Sifianou 1992: 82). Rather surprisingly, even positive politeness strategies are seen as devices that are used to mitigate other face-threatening acts rather than in their own right as acts for establishing, maintaining and/or enhancing social ties of solidarity and in-groupness. In other words, expressive acts like wishing, complimenting and congratulating, which are not mitigated and softened but rather strengthened and reinforced in order to increase their politeness index (see Held 1989; Leech 2014: 12), have not been given much

attention.<sup>2</sup> For Brown and Levinson (1987: 1), politeness is like the “formal diplomatic protocol”, which presupposes the potential for aggression and aims at disarming it. However, as we have noted elsewhere (Sifianou 1992: 82), viewing politeness in this way overlooks the fact that “politeness is not just a means of restraining feelings and emotions in order to avoid conflict, but also a means of expressing them”. For instance, wishing somebody “happy birthday” is primarily a polite means of expressing positive feelings.

### 2.2.1 Well-wishing

Wishing is among the expressive speech acts that have received little scholarly attention (see, e.g., Ronan 2015). It is of note that Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) do not mention wishing among the plethora of speech acts they consider. On the other hand, Leech (2014) dedicates some space to wishing and defines wishes as “remarks that show sympathy with *O* [the Other] by expressing the wish or hope that things will turn out well for her” (Leech 2014: 212).<sup>3</sup> For her part, Dumitrescu (2006: 23, drawing on Katsiki 2001) defines wishes as utterances which “a speaker addresses to his/her interlocutor in order to convey his/her desire that a positive state of affairs come about for the hearer”. In brief, wishes are future oriented acts that imply concern for the well-being and feelings of the Other (Leech 2014: 208, 214), which Kampf (2016) includes among what he calls “solidarity-enhancing devices”.

It has been argued that wishes tend to be highly routinised and are produced to satisfy social expectations in specific contexts. For instance, as Leech (2014: 213) contends, good wishes are “so frequent and normal that they have become highly conventionalized and routinized”. This conventional and routinised character may then suggest that wishes do not necessarily express true emotions. However, irrespective of their being perfunctory or sincere, their omission may create a negative impression, and their presence may contribute to an atmosphere of mutual goodwill (Leech 2014: 214; see also Dumitrescu 2006; Tannen and Öztekin 1981) and solidarity (Kampf 2016). In other words, they are generally regarded as “intrinsically courteous acts” (Leech 2014: 97, 98) and hearers tend not to question the speaker’s sincerity or, in Tannen and Öztekin’s (1981: 39) words, formulas are accepted “as evidence of the true feeling”.

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2 It should be noted here that such acts have been variously called “face-boosting” (Bayraktaroğlu 1991; Holmes 1995) and “face-enhancing” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997; Koutlaki 2002; Sifianou 1995) acts, and are included in Leech’s (2014) “pos-politeness”.

3 Regarding the “wish or hope” that Leech mentions, it is interesting to note that in Greek, such remarks are often realised as a wishes rather than a hopes, as in “I wish you have a good time”, which is the Greek equivalent of the common English “I hope you have a good time”.

Wishes can be seen as an output of the “notice, attend to H’s wants” or “intensify interest to H” positive politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987: 103, 106), which presuppose and assert common ground between commenter and blogger. Wishing could also be seen as an output of the “give gifts to the hearer” strategy such as “goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129; see also Ndoci 2021: 1), which does not involve only tangible goods but human-relations wants, such as being “liked, admired, cared about, understood” and so on (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129). Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2000, quoted in Dumitrescu 2006: 25) shares the same view, when she states that much like compliments, wishes are like small verbal presents that a speaker offers to the addressee, who, thus, has to acknowledge them and express gratitude (see also Sifianou 2001). Given that gift-giving entails reciprocity, one could argue that wishes serve as hints that the wisher would like the relationship to be continued.<sup>4</sup>

As already mentioned, studies dealing with wishes are scant and tend to explore them along with other expressive or solidarity acts, and/or as part of the closing section of interactions (see, e.g., Dumitrescu 2006; Kampf 2016; Maíz-Arévalo 2017b; Ndoci 2021; Ogiermann and Bella 2021; Sifianou and Tzanne 2018). As regards Greek, there are two studies comparing Greek and French wishes (Katsiki 2000, 2001), and one comparing Greek and Turkish formulaic expressions including wishes (Tannen and Öztekin 1981). In her study, Katsiki (2001 in Dumitrescu 2006) distinguishes between situational wishes, which are obligatory under specific social circumstances such as Christmas, and interactional wishes, which are optional and concern the immediate context of situation (e.g., “Enjoy the film”, to a friend who is going to the cinema). For their part, Tannen and Öztekin (1981) highlight cross-cultural similarities and differences in expressing politeness through set phrases. To this end, the authors (1981: 38) note that “Greek has fewer fixed formulas than Turkish but many more than English”. More recently, Theodoropoulou (2015) focused on the reciprocation of birthday wishes on Facebook and observed that responding to them with expressions of gratitude is a prevailing norm, which she interpreted as politic relational work. She further remarked that in the latter part of their responses, individuals frequently included reciprocal wishes for health and happiness. In another study, Ndoci (2021) analyses well-wishing expressions at the end of interactions emphasising their pragmatic function in signalling politeness, relational alignment and closure. Finally, in a recent work of ours (Tzanne and Sifianou 2024), we explore the forms and functions of food-related wishes (e.g., *καλοφάγωτο* ‘may you eat it well’) in Greek food blogs and observe that this type of wish is rare and always goes unnoticed (that is, it is never responded to), for reasons probably related to the asynchronous nature of communication in blogs.

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<sup>4</sup> For details on reciprocity, see Culpeper and Tantucci (2021).



In the present study, we examine wishes from Greek and English food blogs, two sets of data that are studied comparatively for the first time in the relevant literature. More specifically, we aim to compare and contrast the well-wishing practices in Greek and English food blogs by identifying

- (i) the triggering events and categories of wishes expressed in the specific contexts,
- (ii) the form of these wishes in terms of originality (conventional or creative), and
- (iii) the types of relational work (polite or politic) and the functions performed by these wishes in the two datasets.

### 3 Data collection and procedure of analysis

Having explored aspects of wishes in Greek food blogs in previous studies (Tzanne 2022; Tzanne and Sifianou 2024), we here embark on a comparative study of wishing practices in Greek and English food blogs with the aim to enrich knowledge on such practices beyond the Greek context.

As mentioned earlier, the Greek and English food blogs we examined are run by females who could be characterised as “amateur cooks on the Web”. More specifically, these bloggers are not related to cooking professionally in any way, that is, they are not chefs, cookbook writers or restaurant owners, nor are they widely known through some television or YouTube cooking show. They are simply people who have found a space to talk about food, their common interest, and exchange their culinary views and knowledge. The reason why we limited our data to comments from these people’s blogs stems from our contention that comments on recipes by well-known professional chefs may be “polluted” by commenters’ admiration for these public personae. To ensure that the gender would not be a confounding variable, we selected female bloggers, which was not difficult. However, it should be noted that we could not consider the commenters’ gender, as the majority use monikers (e.g., “spoon stories”, “fabfood4all”), making it impossible to determine either their biological sex or how they may identify themselves (e.g., as transgender).

Setting out to locate well-wishing remarks in English food blogs, we soon realised that this was going to be a very difficult task in the sense that wishes seem to be extremely rare in English food blogs. To deal with this, we decided to collect data from the festive period of Christmas and New Year’s Day, that is, that time of the year when it is highly likely for people to exchange wishes. To this end, we compiled a dataset comprising 2,997 comments under 95 recipes that were uploaded on three English food blogs, and 1,027 comments under 83 recipes that were uploaded on three Greek food blogs, between 1 December and 5 January of the last 14 years, as 2010 is the earliest date when all six blogs were in operation. For the blogs that are organised on the basis of monthly archives, collecting December and January data was a

straightforward procedure. On the other hand, for the blogs that did not have monthly archives of recipes, we relied on the category of recipes called “Christmas recipes”, but again, we included only the recipes that were uploaded in December and beginning of January (and excluded those “Christmas recipes” that were uploaded in, for example, October or November). Finally, we should note that comments under December and beginning-of-January recipes that were posted in other months of the year are also included in our dataset, as we thought that this would add variety to the wishes offered (if any).

In order to identify well-wishing remarks in our corpus, we read all posts and comments carefully and collected those comments that contained utterances functioning as wishes. We found 237 comments including wishes in the three English food blogs and 643 comments including wishes in the three Greek food blogs. This confirms our initial observation that wishes are not common in related English data. A similar observation was made by Ogiermann and Bella (2021), who found that wishes were absent from their English data (signs announcing holiday-related closures), whereas they did feature on similar Greek data.

As can be seen in Table 1, the difference between the two datasets is striking, with an average of 62.60 % of Greek comments involving wishes and only 7.90 % of English comments doing the same.

Given that frequency of occurrence is not among the aims of our study, we would like to simply note here that this striking difference could indicate a tendency on the part of Greek people to use the specific positive politeness strategy probably for the positively marked relational work it enables them to perform.

Before proceeding, let us clarify that we take our unit of analysis (a wish) to be a coherent utterance with the function of well-wishing, marked with a capital letter at the beginning and a punctuation mark (usually an exclamation mark to convey the commenter’s emotional involvement) at the end. For example, we take the utterance *Εύχομαι καλή χρονιά με υγεία και πολλές χαρούμενες στιγμές!!!!* (‘I wish [you] a good year with health and many joyful moments!!!!’) to be a single wish. On the basis of

**Table 1:** Distribution of wishes in the data.

Dataset	Recipes	Comments	Comments with wishes		Wishes
			N	%	
English blogs	95	2,997	237	7.90	254 <sup>a</sup>
Greek blogs	83	1,027	643	62.60	807

<sup>a</sup>The total number of wishes is higher than that of comments containing wishes, as the same comment may include more than one wish.

this unit of analysis, we identified 254 wishes in the English food blogs and 807 wishes in the Greek ones.

After identifying wishes in both datasets, we proceeded with establishing a number of categories for analysis and with coding the data. The data was analysed on the basis of seven categories: (1) triggering theme/event, (2) type/category of wish (situational, interactional or mixed), (3) producer of wish (blogger or commenter), (4) recipient of wish (blogger or commenter), (5) position of wish in the comment (e.g., initial, final), (6) presence or absence of response to wish and (7) originality. The identified wishes were then codified accordingly in Excel form by both authors, which facilitated both the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data through various searches and sortings. Any discrepancies in categorisation were discussed by the authors and disagreements were resolved. Due to space limitations, only three categories (triggering theme, type of wish and originality) are discussed in this paper.

Let us note at this point that research on online communication is fraught with complexities concerning ethics. As many have argued (see, e.g., Georgakopoulou 2017; Pihlaja 2016; Scott 2022) just because online language data is freely available does not mean that researchers can use it in any way they like. As regards food blogs, they allow for posters' anonymity and typically do not include sensitive personal information. For our study, we have used data from blogs that are not password protected and, as we do not focus on complete posts, but on a specific speech event, that of wishing, we assume that our reproduction of related examples is of minimum risk. Nevertheless, we have used pseudonyms for all participants, including both bloggers and commenters, and disguised other types of information such as place names.

## 4 Data analysis and findings

The presentation of our findings is organised in response to the first two main aims of our study which are to examine (i) the triggering events and categories of wishes in Greek and English food blogs and (ii) the form of these wishes in terms of conventionality or originality. These findings will then be discussed in Section 5 in relation to our third main aim, which is to examine the type of relational work these wishes perform and the ensuing interpersonal relationships constructed among interactants. Let us note here that, although the ensuing analysis concerns primarily the wishes made during the festive period mentioned earlier, it is hoped that it also offers insights into the forms and functions of wishes in general.

## 4.1 Triggering events and categories of wishes

As can be seen in Table 2, in the Greek dataset, wishes concern a variety of themes/triggering events, with Christmas, the New Year and, generally, the festive season being the most frequent (51.92 %). The second most frequent theme is people's well-being (18.83 %), with several participants wishing *Να είσαι/είστε καλά!* ('May you<sub>SING/PL</sub> be well!')<sup>5</sup> and several others wishing people good so that they repeat this year's activities in a year's time, with *Και του χρόνου!* ('And next year!'). The third most frequent theme (16.35 %) concerns time periods with wishes like *Καλημέρα!* ('Good morning!'), *Καλή Κυριακή!* ('Good Sunday!'), *Καλό μήνα!* ('Good month!'). Such wishes appeared usually at the beginning or end of comments, which indicates that they function as greetings and leave-takings (see also Ndoci 2021). A smaller percentage of wishes concerns happy events such as birthdays or name days (6.44 %), while an even smaller percentage (4.10 %) concerns the preparation, e.g., *Καλή επιτυχία!* ('Good success!') and consumption of the posted dishes, e.g., *Εύχομαι να το απολαύσετε μέχρι το τελευταίο ψίχουλο* ('I hope you enjoy it until the last crumb'), themes directly relevant to the topic of the blog. Other triggering events concern the addressee's prospective engagement in a competition (*Καλή επιτυχία!* 'Good success!', 0.94 %), the arrival of a friend/relative (*Καλωσήρθες* 'Welcome', 0.74 %), or the continuation of an activity (*Καλή συνέχεια* 'Good continuation', 0.68 %).

Concerning the English corpus, it was found that the vast majority of wishes (82.30 %) concerns Christmas, the New Year and, generally, the festive season. The second most frequent theme (12.60 %) relates to the topic of the food blog, that is,

**Table 2:** Triggering events in the data.

Triggering event	Greek (%)	English (%)
Festive season	51.92	82.30
People's well-being	18.83	2.75
Time periods	16.35	1.20
Happy events	6.44	1.15
Cooking and eating	4.10	12.60
Participation in a competition	0.94	0
Arrival of a friend/relative	0.74	0
Continuation of an activity	0.68	0

<sup>5</sup> Subscripts "SING/PL" denote singular or plural number, respectively.

cooking in general, and, in particular, cooking and enjoying the proposed dish. This may indicate the preoccupation of the English commenters with the very topic of the blog. Unlike the Greek corpus, the English dataset contains very few wishes relating to people's well-being (2.75 %), specific time periods (1.20 %) or happy events such as birthdays (1.15 %).

As mentioned earlier, in the relevant literature, wishes have been distinguished into interactional and situational (Katsiki 2001 in Dumitrescu 2006). Dumitrescu (2006: 27, drawing on Katsiki 2001) explains that interactional wishes are optional, adding a positive note usually at the end of an interaction, and may depend on the immediate context of situation (e.g., *Enjoy the dish* in the discourse of food blog comments), but do not relate to public, generally acknowledged occasions. On the other hand, situational wishes are rather obligatory for a certain community under specific social circumstances such as Christmas or the New Year. They usually occur at the beginning of an interaction and depend on the extra-linguistic context (for example, *Merry Christmas*).

The triggering events discussed at the beginning of this section are directly related and lead to the identification of situational and interactional wishes in the data. For instance, wishes concerning the festive season or specific time periods (e.g., good morning) belong to the category of situational wishes. Here, we would like to draw a further distinction between general situational wishes, such as *Merry Christmas* and specific (or personal) situational wishes, such as those relating to birthdays or name days, which Tannen and Öztekin (1981: 41) include in what they call wishes for “happy events”. Such wishes are present in both datasets, though more common in the Greek corpus. Interactional wishes are also present in the data with examples like *Πάντα τύχη στα παιδάκια σου* (‘May your children<sub>DIM</sub><sup>6</sup> always be lucky’) from Greek, and *Hope you feel better* from the English dataset.

Interestingly, our data also yields a third category of wishes, which we term “mixed wishes”, that are neither purely situational nor purely interactional but combine elements from both. An example from the Greek dataset is the wish *Καλή χρονιά, με υγεία, αγάπη και ευημερία* (‘Good year with health, love and prosperity’) offered by a commenter to a food blogger. This wish is triggered by specific (festive) social circumstances, the arrival of the New Year (*Καλή χρονιά*), but the wisher goes beyond the specific public situation to vest the wish with interactional elements concerning the well-being of the blogger, too (*με υγεία, αγάπη και ευημερία* ‘with health, love and prosperity’).

It is, thus, clear that the two main categories of wishes identified in previous studies can occur independently or in combination and, although our findings concern digital communication, it is reasonable to assume that mixed wishes may

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6 The subscript “DIM” denotes the presence of a diminutive suffix.

also occur in other, non-digital environments. Naturally, more work needs to be done in this direction.

Table 3 presents the frequency of occurrence of all three categories of wishes in the two datasets. As can be seen from the Table, the majority of both Greek and English wishes are situational, which is well expected, given that the data was collected from recipes posted in the festive period around Christmas and New Year’s Day. From the Table, it is also clear that interactional and mixed wishes are more common in the Greek data.

These categories will be presented in detail in the remainder of this section and discussed in Section 5, in relation to the types of relational work interactants appear to perform in Greek and English food blogs.

4.1.1 Situational wishes

As shown in Table 3, most English wishes (78.74 %) fall into the category of situational wishes (e.g., *Merry Christmas, Happy New Year*), of which only very few (1.50 %) concern time periods (e.g., *Good morning*). Almost all (97 %) English situational wishes revolve around the festive season and constitute expected and appropriate discourse for this time of the year. It is interesting to note that some of these wishes are mirror responses to previous wishes (e.g., *Happy New Year! – Happy New Year!*). Such cases are highly conventional and could be viewed as expected acts that are simply adequate for the occasion, much like a social obligation fulfilled.

Greek situational wishes (e.g., *Καλή Πρωτοχρονιά* ‘Good New Year’s Day’) are also the majority, though a borderline one (53.40 %). Most of these (61.94 %) concern the festive season, while almost one third (30.60 %) concern various time periods (e.g., *Καλησπέρα* ‘Good evening’; *Καλή εβδομάδα* ‘Good week’), which shows that such wishes are far more common in Greek than in English food blog discourse. Given that time-related wishes usually function as greetings or leave-takings used to open or close a comment, we could claim that the attested differences in the frequency of occurrence of such wishes in the two datasets manifest the different norms of appropriateness holding for Greek and English food blogs.

Table 3: Categories of wishes across the two datasets.

Datasets	Situational (including happy events)	Interactional	Mixed	Total
English data	200 (78.74 %)	39 (15.35 %)	15 (5.90 %)	254
Greek data	431 (53.40 %)	157 (19.45 %)	219 (27.13 %)	807

As stated earlier, in addition to general situational wishes, there are personal situational wishes that are triggered by happy events such as birthdays (or name days for Greek people). Our English data contains a very small number of such situational wishes (1.50 %) concerning the birthday of a blogger (e.g., *Happy birthday!*). On the other hand, the Greek data contain five times as many personal situational wishes (7.42 %) triggered by the happy event of a name day or a birthday (e.g., *Χρόνια Πολλά στον Μιχάλη!* ‘Many Years to Michali!’/ *Να τα εκατοστήσεις* ‘May you live to be a hundred [years old]’). This difference in the frequency of occurrence of such wishes in the two datasets could be explained by reference to the different temporality felicity conditions (see Dumitrescu 2006: 23) in the two communities, that is, the required closeness to the event in order for a wish to be offered. In particular, while English birthday wishes appear to be offered on the same day and not later (except those marked as anticipated or belated wishes), Greek birthday wishes may be offered several days (even a week) later, probably because appropriate Greek birthday wishes do not concern the specific date of birth only but mostly long life.<sup>7</sup> For instance, a frequent conventional birthday wish in Greek is *Να τα εκατοστήσεις* (‘May you live to be a hundred [years old]’).

#### 4.1.2 Interactional wishes

In contrast to situational wishes, interactional wishes are not triggered by specific general social circumstances, nor are they obligatory in interaction. Being optional additions, they presumably facilitate the construction and/or maintenance of positive relationships among the participants. Interactional wishes were found in both our datasets, with the English ones occurring slightly less frequently (15.35 %) than their Greek counterparts (19.44 %). The main themes in both cases were people’s well-being, and the preparation and/or consumption of the proposed dish.

The vast majority of the English interactional wishes (82 %) is related to the topic of the blog and concerns the making of a dish (e.g., *I hope your cranberry sauce goes well*), or the consumption of it (e.g., *Enjoy your brownies!*). This provides further evidence for the preoccupation of English commenters with matters related to the very content of the blog. Participants’ well-being (e.g., *I hope your daughter is better*) is another theme of English interactional wishes, though of much less frequent occurrence (15.40 %).

On the other hand, Greek interactional wishes concern a greater variety of issues, such as cooking (e.g., *Καλά γιορτινά ψησίματα* ‘Good festive bakes’), enjoying the dish (e.g., *Εύχομαι να τα απολαύσετε μέχρι τελευταίο...καρυδάκι!!!* ‘I hope you enjoy them until the very last...walnut<sub>DIM</sub>’), continuation of one’s current activities

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<sup>7</sup> As Tannen and Öztek (1981: 45) note, “Greek formulas value long life”.

(e.g., *Καλή συνέχεια* ‘Good continuation’), and success (e.g., *Καλή επιτυχία στο διαγωνισμό* ‘Good luck in the competition’).

Unlike the English, Greek food blog participants seem to be only marginally preoccupied with the topic of the blog, as only one fifth of Greek interactional wishes concerns the preparation and/or the consumption of the proposed dish. On the other hand, most of the Greek interactional wishes (66.80 %) concern the addressee’s well-being (e.g., *Να ζήσετε με υγεία και χαρές!* ‘May you<sub>PL</sub> live with health and joys!’). Of these, the wish *Να’σαι/Νάστε καλά!* (‘May you<sub>SING/PL</sub> be well!’) is the most popular of the well-being-related interactional wishes in Greek food blogs (e.g., *χαίρομαι που σου έφτιαξα τη διάθεση! Να’σαι καλά!* ‘I’m glad I lifted your<sub>SING</sub> spirits! May you<sub>SING</sub> be well!’). In some cases, the specific expression is combined with thanks (e.g., *Ευχαριστώ πολύ, νάστε καλά!* ‘Thank you very much, may you<sub>PL</sub> be well!’), probably in order to intensify the force of thanking and express the commenter’s deep gratitude for an act of extended praise, a compliment, and/or a previous wish. The combination of these strategies is also likely to contribute to the construction of a relationship of in-groupness and closeness for the interactants involved.

#### 4.1.3 Mixed wishes

As mentioned earlier, in addition to purely situational or purely interactional wishes, in our data, we have identified a third category of wishes that appear to combine elements from both these categories. The wishes that fall into this third category are triggered by general situations such as Christmas and the New Year, but also by personal situations such as name days or birthdays. They usually begin with what appears to be a typical situational wish and continue with elements relating to issues from the realm of interactional wishes, such as the recipient’s well-being, or cooking and consuming a dish. At this point, we should note that Greek mixed wishes appear much more frequently than their English counterpart (27.13 % and 5.90 %, respectively).

A Greek wish that combines all these issues is, for example, *Χρόνια πολλά με υγεία, αγάπη, αισιοδοξία και πολλές νοστιμιές!!!* (‘[May you live] many years with health, love, optimism and many delicacies!!!’). This wish brings together the situational (for the festive period) wish *Χρόνια πολλά* (‘[May you live] many years’) and interactional wishes about the blogger’s well-being (*με υγεία, αγάπη, αισιοδοξία* ‘with health, love, optimism’), and culinary creations (*και πολλές νοστιμιές!!!* ‘and many delicacies!!!’). By the same token, the English *Wishing you a wonderful New Year and many more chocolatey gems in 2012!* involves a typical situational wish (*Wishing you a wonderful New Year*) followed by an interactional wish concerning cooking, the blogger’s culinary creations, in particular. As these examples show, in such cases, the



trigger is typically a public social event, but the wish involves more than what is conventionally expected for the specific situation.

Happy events such as birthdays can also trigger wishes that combine conventional situational wishes with interactional elements like the ones discussed above. An example of this type of wish is *Χρόνια πολλά, καλά και γεμάτα με ωραίες γεύσεις και μυρωδιές!* ('[May you live] many years, good [years] and [years] full of nice flavours and smells!'). In this case, the conventional situational wish *Χρόνια πολλά* ('[May you live] many years') is followed by interactional wishes that concern the blogger's well-being ('good [years]') and culinary achievements ('[years] full of nice flavours and smells!'). Such wishes were only found in the Greek data, as the few birthday wishes in the English dataset were exclusively in the typical and well expected "Happy birthday" form.<sup>8</sup>

An interesting case of mixed wishes is the elliptical Greek wish *Και του χρόνου* ('And next year'), the full meaning of which is roughly "May you be well and celebrate/do the same (wonderful) thing(s) next year, too". Similar to the wishes of mixed type discussed above, this wish can be triggered by specific annual social circumstances like Christmas, the arrival of the New Year or someone's birthday, but it implicitly focuses on the well-being of the people involved so that they can enjoy the same situation (e.g., the family dinner on Christmas Day) or participate in the same activity (e.g., blowing out the candles on their birthday cake) in a year's time.

## 4.2 Conventional and creative wishes

The formulaic nature of wishes has often been discussed in previous studies (Tannen and Öztekin 1981; Leech 2014, among others) which have stressed the routinised and conventionalised nature of these expressive acts. Our analysis has indeed shown that the vast majority of the wishes in our data is conventional wishes, with the English ones occurring more frequently (87 %) than their Greek counterparts (79.80 %). It is worth noting that almost all (93 %) English conventional wishes concern the festive season (e.g., *Merry Christmas!*; *Happy New Year!*), while a small minority (3 %) concerns happy events (e.g., *Happy birthday!*) and time periods (e.g., *Have a nice week*).

On the other hand, just over half of the Greek conventional wishes (51.86 %) concern the festive season (e.g., *Καλά Χριστούγεννα!* 'Good Christmas!'; *Καλή Πρωτοχρονιά!/χρονιά!* 'Good New Year's Day!/year!'), and almost one fifth of them (19.87 %) concerns various time periods (e.g., *Καλημέρα* 'Good morning'; *Καλησπέρα*

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<sup>8</sup> As one of the reviewers suggested, this finding could possibly relate to Greek wishing rituals where two or more wishes typically occur in most interactions.

‘Good evening’; *Καλή εβδομάδα* ‘Good week’). Furthermore, several conventional wishes (18.01 %) concern the well-being of others (e.g., *να ’σαι καλά* ‘may you<sub>SING</sub> be well’; *γεια στα χέρια σου* ‘health to your<sub>SING</sub> hands’), and only a small number of such wishes (3.72 %) concerns the topic of the blog, namely cooking and eating (*Καλή επιτυχία* ‘Good success’; *Καλοφάγωτο* ‘May it be eaten well’). The findings show greater variety of themes in the Greek than in the English set of conventional wishes, which indicates that the formulaic nature of Greek wishes noted in previous studies (e.g., Tannen and Öztekin 1981) is attested in relation to various communicative contexts and themes.

In addition to conventional, formulaic wishes, a small number of Greek and English wishes pertaining to all three categories (situational, interactional, mixed) are what we call *enhanced conventional* wishes. Such wishes are characterised by some degree of stylistic variation that enhances their conventional form and indicates that additional effort has been made in their expression. The percentages of such wishes in the Greek and English dataset are quite similar (5.94 % and 7.08 %, respectively). An example from the English dataset is *A big Happy Christmas to you and your family!*, where the conventional *Happy Christmas* is further enhanced with the modifier *big* and the explicit mention of the intended recipients of the wish (*to you and your family*). A similar example from the Greek dataset is *Καλή χρονιά εύχομαι από καρδιάς!/μέσα από την καρδιά μου!* (‘I wish good year from the heart!/[from within my heart!’). In this case, the formulaic “good year”, an elliptical utterance, is expressed in its full syntactic form (‘I wish good year’), with the addition of the phrase “from the heart!/[from within my heart!]” that enhances the conventional meaning by stressing the sincerity and intensity of the wisher’s emotions.

While it is true that many well-wishing remarks are conventionalised, our data shows that wishers can also be creative (see also Ndoci 2021), expressing wishes that clearly deviate from conventional forms. Such *creative* wishes appear more frequently in the Greek (14.20 %) than in the English data (8.20 %). For instance, *χιλιόχρονη και χιλιοευτυχισμένη* (‘may you live to be a thousand years old and a thousand times happy’) is made up of the routine birthday wish *χιλιόχρονη* (‘may you live to be a thousand years old’), and the novel construct *χιλιοευτυχισμένη* (‘a thousand times happy’). Such examples not only presuppose but may also contribute to the consolidation and/or enhancement of solidarity between interlocutors.

Generally speaking, it appears that Greek and English wishers sometimes invest time and effort in order to create a wish that is, to varying degrees, out of the ordinary, probably in an attempt to sound personal and genuine. They may also want to make their wish stand out among a large number of wishers in a long sequence of well-wishing remarks, in order to achieve a more likeable presentation of themselves. Concerning their form and meaning, Greek and English creative wishes

usually involve unexpected collocations (e.g., *Happy blending*) or neologisms (e.g., *Καλή χρονιά και ζαχαροτριανταφυλλένια να έχεις!* ‘May you have a good and sugary-rosy year!’).

The positive effect of creative wishes becomes more pronounced when different posters’ wishes appear in a sequence, where every new wish seems to attempt to surpass the one before it and make the addressee notice and appreciate it even more. For example, the wish *Χαρούμενα Χριστούγεννα με υγεία!* (‘Happy Christmas with health’) is followed by *Χρόνια πολλά!!! Καλές γιορτές, με υγεία και χαρά!!!!!!* (‘Many years!!! Good festive days, with health and joy!!!!!!’), which is followed by *Χρόνια πολλά με υγεία, αγάπη, αισιοδοξία και πολλές νοστιμιές!!!* (‘Many years with health, love, optimism and many delicacies!!!’). Here we have variation, increased length and clearly an effort to show greater concern for the addressee, which results in the construction of the identity of a caring and considerate commenter. In this case, relational work develops escalating from making the least possible effort to meet the lowest possible requirements, to investing increased effort in order to render wishes creative, more mindful towards the addressee, and possibly more likeable.

In general terms, creativity has been characterised as a purposeful act (Carter 2004) with repercussions for the construction of the identity of the people who exploit it. One could surmise that in face-to-face interactions, conventionalised wishes are used with more distant others, whereas more original and creative ones are saved primarily for closely related people and have particular communicative effects. In online contexts such as food blogs, where one typically does not know their readership, the use of creative wishes most probably contributes to the construction of familiarity and in-groupness.

## 5 Discussion and concluding remarks

Based on the way wishes have been received in the two datasets, we would like to begin our discussion with a general observation, namely that wishes, acts theoretically linked to politeness (see Section 2), have been treated as appropriate and considerate acts by all interactants involved, as nowhere in the corpus are there indications of participants perceiving them as inappropriate or negative. In terms of the discursive approach to politeness adopted in this study, this shows that wishes are instances of positively marked relational work that could be politic or polite in nature. In this section, we bring together the various categories and forms of Greek and English food blog wishes and their frequency of occurrence (see Table 3), in order to arrive at an interpretation of the type of relational work (politic or polite) interactants perform.

Studying relational work in a specific communicative environment is by no means an easy task. Politic work is interwoven with the notion of appropriateness and mere adequacy and that requires specific criteria that would emanate from the environment examined. Moreover, in order to identify polite relational work in the data with a fair amount of certainty, it may be necessary to establish politic work in the specific setting first, since, according to the approach to politeness we adopt in this study, polite behaviour is behaviour that goes beyond what is expected and merely adequate for the occasion (i.e., *politic* behaviour).

With these in mind, we set out to identify the types of relational work, polite or politic, that wishes perform in the digital context of food blogs on the basis of criteria that revolve around relevance to situation/topic, and the amount of effort interactants invest when engaging in well-wishing practices. In more specific terms, we expect to find *politic* behaviour when there is a high frequency of occurrence of wishes that are expected in relation to the social situation (festive period) and/or the topic of the blogs examined (food, cooking, enjoying a dish). Another indication of politic behaviour could be the amount of effort that seems to have been invested in the wish. In this sense, conventional and formulaic wishes which involve minimum effort and are simply adequate and appropriate for the specific context can be viewed as indicative of politic behaviour. On the other hand, the high frequency of wishes that concern issues that lie outside the specific social situation (festive season) and concern interpersonal matters, may lead to the identification of polite relational work. Moreover, creative wishes whose form departs from conventions and formulae indicate that additional effort has been expended in their expression and suggest, again, the performance of polite relational work.

For instance, in the festive season, especially near Christmas Day or New Year's Day, one is expected to offer wishes such as "Merry Christmas" and "Happy New Year", respectively. This type of behaviour can be identified as *politic* relational work, the type that is well expected and merely appropriate for the specific context (Locher 2004; Locher and Watts 2005). Furthermore, there may be wishes that relate to topics not directly relevant to the social situation at hand, but essential for cultivating positive relationships among the interactants and ensuring that a positive atmosphere prevails in the encounter (e.g., *Να 'σαι καλά* 'May you be well'). Such behaviour can be characterised as *polite* relational work, the type of behaviour that involves increased consideration for others, leading to the creation and cultivation of an atmosphere of closeness, intimacy and solidarity.

Concerning the occurrence of situational wishes, we observe high frequencies in both datasets, with the vast majority of wishes falling into this category. As such wishes are mostly concerned with Christmas, the New Year and the festive season in general, the high frequencies are most probably related to the festive season being upmost in people's minds. In other words, these frequencies are well expected in

terms of the time of the year when the wishes examined are posted. Producing that which is expected, appropriate and adequate for the occasion indicates, in our view, the performance of politic relational work by both Greek and English food blog participants.

Viewed in more detail, situational wishes constitute the vast majority in the English dataset (78.74 %), and almost all of them (97 %) concern the festive season. This suggests a stronger tendency within the English dataset to engage in politic relational work than that within the Greek dataset where respective percentages are noticeably lower (only 53.40 % are situational wishes, of which 61.71 % concern the festive season). Furthermore, the frequency of mirror responses to festive wishes in the English dataset (34 %), which is almost three times as high as the respective percentage in the Greek data (12 %), provides further evidence of a tendency for English wishers to offer conventional wishes that are just adequate for the occasion, and, thus, to engage in politic relational work.

As far as interactional wishes are concerned, Table 3 shows that the percentage of such wishes in the Greek dataset is slightly higher (19.45 %) than its English counterpart (15.35 %). An examination of the themes of Greek and English interactional wishes suggests the need to differentiate between topic-related (food, cooking) and topic-unrelated wishes (well-being, etc.), as the two datasets present interesting differences in the frequency of occurrence of these themes. In particular, the very low percentage of Greek wishes relating to food, which is odd at first sight, given the communicative context examined (food blogs), gives rise to the need to differentiate between topic-related and topic-unrelated wishes in order to study the issue in more depth. This differentiation offers a clearer view of the practices adopted within the Greek and English datasets. More specifically, the difference between the two datasets is that, while most Greek interactional wishes (78.98 %) are unrelated to the topic of food blogs, the overwhelming majority of English interactional wishes (82.05 %) concerns cooking and/or enjoying a dish (see Section 4.1.2). Thus, even when engaging in interpersonal work, the English remain focused on the topic of the blog, whereas Greek wishers appear to attempt to bring themselves closer to their addressees and cultivate in-groupness by showing concern for the health and well-being of other commenters. Indeed, the frequent expression of wishes on the theme of “well-being” suggests Greek people’s interest in interpersonal relationships in communication. In our view, this indicates the performance of polite relational work, as, in such cases, Greek people go beyond what is expected and enhance the positive face of all participants in the encounter by expressing concern for the well-being of others. This could be seen as an indication of Greek wishers’ tendency to engage in polite work more frequently than English wishers in the context of food blogs.

In such cases, Greek people seem to prioritise others' well-being over the successful execution of a recipe or the consumption of a dish, and view food blogging as an opportunity for socialisation and cultivation of in-groupness and solidarity, hence the performance of polite relational work. By contrast, with their many topic-related interactional wishes (three times as many as their Greek counterparts) concerning cooking and enjoying a dish, English people stay focused on the content and main topic of the blog and offer wishes that are non-salient but merely appropriate for the specific context. In this sense, English people can be viewed as engaging in politic relational work.

Mixed wishes, the category our study has added to the already established ones in the literature, are rather scarce in the English dataset (5.90 %), but almost five times more frequent in the Greek dataset (27.13 %). The frequent expression of mixed wishes in the Greek data suggests that, when a wish for specific social circumstances is in order, Greek bloggers and commenters tend not to limit themselves to what is strictly adequate and appropriate for the social situation at hand. Instead, they go beyond what is conventionally expected and enhance the situational wish with elements indicating their interest in interpersonal relationships; this is in line with the attested tendency of Greek interactants for positively marked relational work in the specific digital context (Tzanne 2022).

Concerning the degree of originality in Greek and English wishes, both sets exhibit high frequencies in the occurrence of conventional wishes, with the English data displaying the highest (see Section 4.2). From a closer analysis of the data, it becomes clear that, when offering wishes relevant to the festive season, English food blog participants resort almost exclusively (93 %) to formulaic conventional wishes that can be viewed as “part of the politic behaviour expected in the social situation” (Watts 2003: 156). This may suggest that, to them, exchanging season greetings is a highly routinised and conventionalised activity, in which they engage by making the minimal effort required, much like performing a social obligation. The great number of formulaic, conventional wishes and the small percentage of creative wishes in the English corpus may indicate that English food blog participants resort to ready-made solutions and invest little effort in expressing wishes. This may, in turn, lead to the conclusion that, for them, festive wishes are politic relational work.

At this point, we could suggest that routine, conventionalised wishes are examples of politic behaviour (see Watts 2003: 156) rather than positively marked relational work, which is the case with enhanced conventional and creative wishes (see Section 4.2). This is in accord with Brown and Levinson (1987: 93) general observation that the additional effort the speaker expends in producing elaborate utterances may be perceived as communicating their sincere desire to show care for their addressee. The authors (1987: 94) conclude that “[s]uch expenditures of effort seem to be intimately linked to polite usages across many cultures”.

As stated earlier, in the Greek dataset, the percentage of conventional wishes is lower than that of the English dataset. On the other hand, Greek people are often (14.25 %) found to offer novel and creative wishes, wishes that vary, to a lesser or greater extent, from the wishes that have appeared up to that point in the blog. This comes into sharp contrast with the English data, where creative wishes appear less frequently than their Greek counterparts (5.90 %). Overall, the frequency of occurrence of the total of enhanced and creative wishes is noticeably higher in the Greek dataset (20.19 %) than in the English one (12.98 %). This shows a stronger tendency on the part of Greek food blog participants to engage in polite work (in the sense of Watts 2003), by investing additional effort to surpass the expression of a conventional wish. Based on the above, we would like to argue that, in the specific context, Greek people exhibit a strong tendency to perform polite relational work when exchanging well-wishing remarks. A possible explanation for our findings relates to the preference of Greek people for positive politeness strategies (see, e.g., Makri-Tsilipakou 2001; Pavlidou 1994; Sifianou 1992; Tzanne 2001).

On the whole, we contend that enhanced conventional and creative wishes are highly likely to contribute to the construction of a caring and likeable identity and the co-construction of bonding and in-group identity, that is, the sense of belonging to a group with shared values. Thus, our findings have implications not only for the type of relational work performed each time, but also for the discursive identity Greek and English bloggers and commenters construct. In particular, by engaging in the well-wishing practices discussed above, we could reasonably argue that Greek food bloggers and commenters attempt to construct the identity of in-group (see also Tzanne 2019, 2022) and create and maintain relationships of closeness, camaraderie and solidarity. This could be seen as corroborating evidence for the fact that food blogs do constitute a distinct community of practice. More broadly, Greek interactants are united by their shared interest in food, but simultaneously seem to construe food blogs as occasions for establishing rapport and in-group relationships in the encounter. On the other hand, while also united by their common interest in food, English food blog participants seem to cultivate less intimate relationships that are characterised by formality and distance, as they have been found to express most of their wishes in a rather formulaic way that is simply the expected and appropriate one for the circumstances. Certainly, more research is needed to corroborate this preliminary interpretation of the identity Greek and English food blog participants construct based on other discourse aspects of food blogs, such as (self-)praise or other (than wishes) politeness strategies. Possibilities for further research might also include the comparison of comments from amateur blogs with those uploaded on professional blogs. It would also be interesting to study the forms and functions of wishes offered by Greek and English food blog participants outside the festive period examined in the present paper. Another interesting direction for prospective

research could be the exploration of politeness issues in comments uploaded on food blogs in other (than Greek or English) languages.

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